



THE SECRETARY OF TRANSPORTATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20590

April 1, 1999

Dear State DOT, transit operator or MPO Official:

As you likely know, the Transportation Equity Act for the 21st Century (TEA-21) establishes policies and programs that refocus provisions of the Intermodal Surface Transportation Efficiency Act of 1991 (ISTEA) to build upon the successes achieved. TEA-21 expands the scope and depth of issues addressed in making transportation investment decisions, with significant implications for transportation planning. New areas of challenge under TEA-21 include:

- o addressing job access/reverse commute needs;
- o promoting efficient system operation and management, including "mainstreaming" Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS);
- o addressing the coordination of federally funded non-emergency transportation services;
- o maintaining and enhancing public involvement processes;
- o more effectively linking planning and project development, especially in consideration of social, economic and environmental impacts; and,
- o strengthening transportation decision-making in metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas.

Meeting these challenges may require reallocation of resources, especially for statewide and metropolitan planning departments, particularly in the early years of TEA-21 as planning organizations seek to add staff resources and initiate studies that incorporate the new planning responsibilities.

Accordingly, please consider opportunities for increased resource-sharing among planning process participants in your areas. Resource allocation opportunities can range from shared/loaned staff and consultant expertise to increasing both the overall level and allocation of funding provided to agencies involved in transportation planning. Please note, also, that planning continues to be an eligible activity for funding through the National Highway System (NHS) program, the Surface Transportation Program (STP), and certain Federal Transit Administration (FTA) formula programs.

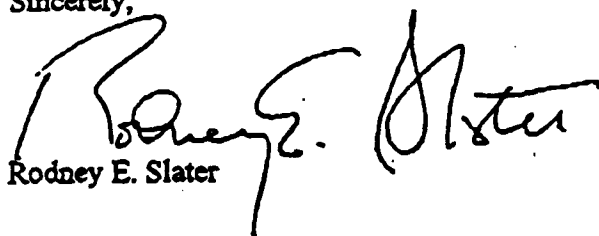
ISTEA helped to usher in a new era of strengthened working partnerships within the planning process. Many areas have taken advantage of the funding flexibility and shared decision-making processes provided by ISTEA to cooperatively address the important transportation issues through their statewide and metropolitan planning processes.

Now, under TEA-21, planning process partners encounter new opportunities and new challenges. While authorized levels of funding for planning are projected to grow under TEA-21, 41 percent in Federal Highway Administration funds and 50 percent in FTA funds, by Year 2003, the challenges may overwhelm even these increases. I want to

encourage all planning process participants to effectively and proactively work together to ensure that resource allocations most effectively support transportation decision-making and planning throughout the state in both metropolitan and non-metropolitan areas. Strengthened partnerships and resource-sharing are critical for coordinated and effective planning and programming to support expedited project development and implementation.

Thank you for considering this request. I look forward to working with you in taking full advantage of the opportunities provided in TEA-21 for improving transportation planning and program development across the nation.

Sincerely,



Rodney E. Slater